REASON and SENTIMENT

Doctor Paul Dubois

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REASON AND SENTIMENT

An Address Delivered in the Aula of the University of Berne, March 3, 1910

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Authorized Translation
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REASON AND SENTIMENT

The whole life of man, like that of all animated beings, is—*activity*. In moments of repose, as well as when at work, we are always in action. Even sleep does not suspend this activity; the work of thought still goes on secretly; we dream and live our dreams, while without our knowledge they are betrayed by movements and words. From birth to death the human organism reacts under the influence of a multitude of stimuli, and works unceasingly.

In this activity we distinguish *automatic actions,* which are accomplished mechanically without the intervention of our consciousness, such as the phenom-

ena of digestion, of respiration, of the circulation, etc.; *voluntary actions,* which we execute consciously under the influence of *motives.* It is these actions, called voluntary, that make up what has been termed the *relational life;* that is to say, the intercourse with our fellow men, our social life. It is of this conscious activity, that is of our conduct, that I am going to speak.

What are the springs that cause us to act, which determine our action? They are the sentiments and nothing but the sentiments. Whatever we may do, we always act under the dominion of a sentiment, good or bad, strong or weak, durable or fleeting.

If we consulted poets, the literary men or the artists upon this psychological question, they would tell us that the

number of the sentiments was legion; and, indeed, since the world began, they have quarried the elements of their novels and their dramas from this mine of the sentimental life; and so numerous and varied are the sentiments that the mine is an inexhaustible one.

In both music and literature, if one eliminates plagiarisms and reminiscences, the artist always arrives at a personal expression; he never reproduces exactly the same musical or literary phrase and always finds new themes to express.

But however complicated music may be, it nevertheless reduces itself to the combination of seven notes and their octaves. For the sentiments, in spite of their number and complexity, the simplification is still easier. There are not

seven sentiments, the combination of which would constitute the sentimental life; there are two only—*desire* and *fear*. The former urges man forward and incites him to seek that which he desires; the latter holds him back and makes him recoil from that which he fears. In short, these are sentiments only of *pleasure* and of *displeasure*. I go further, and say that man has never had but a single motive of action—*desire*, whether it be a positive desire that something happen, or a negative desire that something do not happen. Examine from this point of view all your actions and those of your fellow men and you will always find this single spring setting in motion all your energies—*desire*.

A rosebud blossoms half-opened in

my garden; it looks very beautiful and I wish to take it; at once my hand is thrust forward and I pluck it. But the desire might also be negative, if I am afraid that the bud is too young to pick, or if it is in my neighbor's garden; a fear then opposes my first wish and causes me to draw back. A young man sees a pretty girl; a desire is awakened; he would like to kiss her, and he will certainly do so if it be at the carnival season and his education allows the desire. At an ordinary time he will be restrained by all kinds of considerations, perhaps that he is afraid of a slap from a light hand, or that he yields to the fear of offending against the conventions.

But, you will say, in this illustration you indicate the opposition between *sentiment* and *reason*. When the youth re-

presses the outburst of passion, it is the latter which plays the fine part. But there are cases where, on the other hand, it is sentiment that takes the lead, and incites to good action, while cold reason arrests the impulse of sentiment and leads to selfish resolutions.

I am aware of this distinction; it is generally admitted and it has even entered into our every-day language. Is there not a saying, "The heart is the part that makes us right or wrong," and did Pascal not write, "The heart has reasons that reason does not know"? Well, in spite of this authority I can not admit the antinomy that is established between sentiment and reason; it is only apparent; it contains an error that I consider fatal, and which I am anxious to combat.

Certainly, when we examine the matter superficially, we seem to recognize in man two kinds of motives—those of *sentiment* and those of *reason.* It would often appear as tho there were an opposition between the two, that there were in us two personalities, the one thoughtless, extravagant, and carried away toward the desired act, the other, well balanced, prudent and maintaining self-mastery. And, as I have already observed, we do not always assign the same value to these two halves of ourselves. Sometimes it is the reasonable man we praise, able to resist the impulse of passion; then it is reason that we put in the first place; it is she who must direct the sentiment and modify it, if need be. In other cases we like to see people acting under the

domination of sentiment, doing a good deed, as it were, spontaneously and without reflection. We say that these are *people of heart,* and we have a somewhat scornful smile for the pedants who want to reason over everything; we find them exceedingly wearisome. And it is not only good actions and noble deeds giving direct expression to sentiment that we thus approve. Our sympathy for sentiment occasionally carries us further and causes us actually to excuse wrong, even where there is merely a certain sentimentality indicated in the wrong-doers; we judge them from an artistic standpoint. Poets are particularly indulgent toward elegant vice; they sing of wine, debauch and even crime, and we allow ourselves to be so lulled by the melody of their verse that

we almost feel a little desire to imitate the example of their heroes. On the stage, Don Juan finds admirers even among virtuous women, and we may feel some sympathy for a clever villain.

In these contradictory judgments in regard to sentiment and reason there are elements of truth and correct observation; but there is a fundamental error at the root of these views which I would like to make plain.

I shall have no difficulty in having it admitted, first of all, that sentiments do not arise in the heart, but in the head. The heart does not feel; its task is to contract regularly, to drive renovated blood to the organs to maintain their functions. No doubt, it is not a simple pump drawing in and squeezing out; it is a delicate organ

connected by nerves with the central nervous system. Nor does it beat with the regularity of a pendulum; its rate is accelerated or retarded according to the feelings that move our minds; thus it shares in all our joys and in all our sorrows; it expresses them. It plays, therefore, a great, tho secondary, part in our sentimental life. When we say that the sentiments come from the heart, it is almost as if one said that, in the dog, the sentiments come from the tail, since it wags that organ when it is pleased, and hides it between its legs when it is afraid.

It is, therefore, to our mind, and not to our heart, that we must relegate the sentiments which cause us to act; upon this point, I think, that we shall all be agreed.

I can not stop here to define the mind; that would carry me too far, and in so obscure a question of the metaphysical order, I should not succeed in pleasing all my audience. Nevertheless, there is one fact which every one must recognize, and that is that we have a brain which allows us to *think,* to *feel,* and consequently, to *act.* It is to the entirety of these complex functions that, according to circumstances, we apply the almost synonymous words *soul, mind, intelligence, judgment,* etc.

We are so accustomed to make these distinctions, which are merely abstractions, that we have come to conceive of our soul as composed of different parts, one serving to recognize and appreciate things (mind, intelligence, etc.), another as being the seat of the

sentiments. We, so to speak, imagine these mental faculties as occupying different compartments in our heads and almost suggest that reason and sentiment are separated by water-tight partitions which prevent the intelligence from keeping order in the sanctuary of our sentimental impulses. That is where the mistake is.

Each of our organs has special functions. The mouth masticates the food; the stomach and intestines submit it to a whole series of chemical transformations; the heart supplies the various organs with blood oxygenated by the lungs, etc. Each of these workers toils diligently at its task, but keeps in harmony with the others, so as to accomplish a useful work, favorable to the conservation of the individual and

of the race. Our soul, or if you will, our mind—for it is all one—lives entirely by *mental representations,* by *images.* This is a truth that is not sufficiently taken into account. We endeavor to distinguish between subjective and objective, between a feeling that we experience without others perceiving it, and an observation made by our senses, which can be submitted to the criticism of others. There is even a school of psychologists who wish to banish the subjective from science, while they adhere to the data termed objective. But everything in the mental life is *subjective.* Everything is an *image* to us; our simplest sensations are *images,* and our more complex impressions are *images;* our thoughts and the words that serve to express them

are *images,* and the sentiments that proceed from them and which we perceive and which culminate in actions are also *images.* Permit me to go a little more deeply into this thesis, which is too little thought about, with the result that the simplest questions of psychology have been confused.

The immortal Aristotle long ago said: *There is nothing in the intelligence which has not first of all been in the senses.* That means that there is no thought which is not called forth by a sensation coming either from without or from within ourselves, and brought to our understanding by the five senses. By sight, touch, hearing, smell and taste we perceive objects and conclude that they exist; again, by the aid of the senses, we establish the relations be-

tween things, and compare them, and form a judgment in regard to their properties. But this is all *imagery*. Let us take an illustration.

I prick my finger; there you have a mechanical phenomenon. The wound irritates the terminations of the sensory nerves, and a wave of a nature still unknown, but whose velocity has been measured (30 meters a second), commences to travel along the nerves of the arm; it is, as yet, a wholly material and physiological phenomenon. The movement goes on until it arrives at the brain and sets a group of cerebral cells into vibration; it is still physiological. But now there intervenes a phenomenon which no scientist has as yet been able to explain and about which we have not even a notion; our

feeling and thinking *self,* that is to say, our mind perceives what we call a sensation. This is no longer mechanical and physiological, it is now psychological. Sensation is an *internal image,* perceived subjectively, a *mental representation,* very different in itself to a cellular vibration. It becomes already complex when it is translated into the simple words: I have pricked myself. In thus expressing ourselves we distinguish clearly: a feeling, suffering *self,* the subject, and an extraneous *cause,* which has produced the wound. At the same time we recognize certain properties in the agent that wounds us; we know that it is a needle or a thorn; we have already spontaneously accomplished an act of defense by drawing back the finger. It is all over in a

fraction of a second, and follows a regular sequence that is always the same: *wound, nerve current, disturbance of cerebral cells;* these are the physiological conditions of sensation. In the last resort the whole process resolves itself into a *psychological* phenomenon, a *subjective* image of a pin-prick. So much is it a mental representation that the sensation may arise without physical cause, without an actual pin-prick. We may all experience a sensation without it being provoked by a material cause, or before that cause has acted, by the effect of expectation alone.

It is not our eye that sees, for the eye is only a stereoscopic photographic apparatus which is not endowed with the sense of sight; it is the observer

placed behind who perceives the image as on the ground glass. Our ear hears nothing, any more than the receiver of a telephone; it is the subscriber to the telephone who hears. It is not the mouth that tastes the food, nor the nose that appreciates odors, and it is not the fingers that judge of the properties of the bodies which they touch. In all these operations of the senses it is our *self,* in other words, our *mind,* which at once *feeling* and *thinking,* stores up the image and makes at the same time judgment upon it.

Doubtless, under ordinary conditions, for the appreciation of the real, our senses are necessary; eyes are needed to see, and ears for hearing. But a blind man may have hallucinations of sight and a deaf man may hear imagi-

nary words. Taine even ventured to say that all our perceptions in the normal state were *true hallucinations.* I can not allow this expression, for to have hallucinations means that the mind is perverted; hallucinations are, therefore, never true. But it is correct to say that: Everything in the mental life is *imaginary,* that is to say, a formation of mental images, and it is necessary to distinguish *true imaginations,* adequate to the reality, from *false imaginations,* where there is error.

Allow me to illustrate these facts by an example of another kind; it will seem commonplace but it summarizes my idea well.

You press the button of your bell to summon your servant; this is the analogue of the pricking of the finger

or of any other stimulation of a sensory organ. The electric current darts along the wires as does the nerve current in the nerves. The bell rings; this represents the disturbance of the cells of the brain. This is entirely mechanical and physical and proceeds automatically, always in the same way, without our being able to alter it. But another element now enters into play, the servant answers or not according as she is present or absent, attentive or heedless, in good humor or sulky. It is like our mind which does not perceive a sensation when occupied, does not see an object or does not hear what has been said; in terror, in anger and in religious or patriotic exaltation we may be even grievously wounded and feel no pain.

It may also happen that the servant believes that she has heard the bell sound when the button has not been touched; our mind may similarly perceive a sensation when nothing has been done to provoke it. You fancy that is rare? By no means; my friend, Dr. Schnyder carried out the experiment of "electrifying" about three hundred persons with a machine which contained no source of electricity; seventy-seven per cent. of the subjects experienced various sensations, from the slightest twitching to intolerable pains, and described minutely what they felt. This suggestibility is not peculiar to those who are ill; it is human and is called *credulity*. You observe that the mental representation suffices to provoke the sensation, in the absence

of any outward cause. The characteristic phenomenon of all our mind life is therefore mental representation, true or false, but in any case subjective.

What then is sentiment? It is a mental representation which has become warm or is colored by the addition of an emotional movement. A mental image may remain cold and purely intellectual; it is then without effect upon our actions. We do not react under the influence of a pure idea; for action, a passionate, emotional element, is necessary. Etymologically, the word emotional means: that which puts in motion. Let me give some illustrations.

You are reading a letter which contains simply the account of a journey and other more or less indifferent par-

ticulars. Each word is a mental representation, and in reading the letter we observe a succession of images, often very complicated, for a word may already express many ideas. Suddenly, in your friend's letter, you come upon a word of reproach, because you have neglected to take a step that he expected of you. This mental representation will not leave you cold like those preceding it. You are now a prey to a small emotion of shame; you may actually blush, and stirred by a feeling of regret, you take steps to repair your negligence.

Another example: A young lady is passing a flower-shop and notices a bunch of carnations: a mental image. The representation may remain cold, and the young lady will pass on with-

out troubling herself further about the flowers. If she thinks they are very fine, she will stop or she will enter the shop to buy them; that is because the image has been colored and is accompanied by a *feeling of pleasure*—of esthetic enjoyment. The feeling may be more tender if she wishes to make a present of the carnations to a sick friend or if she herself receives them from another. Will it not be more piquant still if it is her lover's hand that presents them?

A last illustration to show clearly how a mental image which is commonplace to begin with may be colored by various agreeable or disagreeable sentiments; the anecdote is a true one. A young Swiss, travelling in France, was invited to a country house. At

dinner a silver dish was passed: a very ordinary picture which should surely evoke no emotion; or, at most, he will experience some pleasure, if he considers it handsome, or possibly a feeling of envy, if he is fond of fine silverware. Suddenly the young man observes that, engraved upon its rim, the dish bears the arms of his family; it had been carried off at the time of the capture of Berne by the French and had passed through successive sales into the hands of the host. You can imagine the scene and understand that the discovery would create some commotion in the mind of our compatriot. He may suffer from it yet if he thinks about it; reminiscence suffices to revive the mental representation which will color itself with sentiment.

Examine in the light of these facts all your *thoughts,* all your *feelings,* and all your *actions,* and you will observe that they always succeed each other in exactly the same order: a *thought* or *mental image;* it may remain cold; it may, on the other hand, be colored by a *sentiment* of pleasure or displeasure, involving desire or fear; *action* will be the necessary termination of it, unless another mental representation arises, to create a new desire, contrary to the first.

What is the reason of the transformation of the cold mental image into a warm sentiment determining action? It is *self-love.*

The mental representation is cold so long as it remains general and has no direct interest for us. Thus, at a

scientific lecture, even tho it interests us very much, the words cause a crowd of precise and cold images to succeed each other in our mind. That is the pure intellectual life, that in which the scientific man delights, whose main object is to know and to learn. But it is no longer so when our attention is directed to ourselves, to our moral or material interests. As soon as we find ourselves in the front rank the mental representation is accompanied by an emotional movement, by a *sentiment.* This interest may be of a material and vulgar order, as when we have pleasure in eating something good; however lofty a soul may be, it does not remain insensible to such pleasures. We reckon the sentiment which constrains us to seek the esthetic

enjoyments of the arts as more elevated. Lastly, we may become enthusiastic for moral and religious ideas, and thirst after the ideal and virtue. We must, in short, if there be blood in our veins, be capable of experiencing pleasure in all its forms—which made the decadent poet Baudelaire say: "Make yourselves drunk with wine, with love and with virtue; it is all one, only intoxicate yourselves."

Conversely, we experience feelings of displeasure for material reasons, as when we are cold or when we eat something with a bad taste; we have an aversion for what is ugly in art; lastly, we feel pain and indignation in the presence of an evil action. In general, these sentiments of pleasure and displeasure are very personal, let us say,

selfish; it is when our dear person is touched that we react most vigorously. But we may experience the same feelings in regarding the happiness or unhappiness of others. Widening the circle of our affections, we may consider the interests of our family, of our friends, of our town, of our country, and of the whole of humanity. Then we experience a joyous emotion on learning of a good action; and we rejoice at an event which brings happiness to others; on the other hand, we may be filled with sadness or shake with indignation at an injustice, altho the victim is a stranger to us. But, mark well, it comes back always to the same point. Our mental representations are colored by various sentiments as soon as we feel ourselves touched in

our material or moral interests. That is, the precise point at which the mental picture, colorless to begin with, becomes tinted in all shades, from the palest, which create but a slight pleasure or displeasure, to the warm colors which lead to the outburst of the act of passion. And do not let it be forgotten, the succession is always the same: *mental representation, sentiment, action.* The rapidity with which these phenomena succeed each other is so great that we have the impression that the sentiment is spontaneous, and the action automatic. It is like the bell, where the ringing sounds the moment we press the button; the velocity of the current is too great to allow us to perceive the sequence; but we know that, chronologically, the pressing of

the button precedes the sound of the bell.

What is the use of such a conception? Has it, like many questions of psychology, a scientific interest only? No; to understand rightly the mechanism of our mental life is of capital importance for our conduct in life, and I believe ignorance of these things to be the source of disaster to many.

In our own life, as in that of others, we deplore a multitude of wrong acts, compromising our happiness and that of our fellow men. We would like to prevent them, and to lead the individual back to a better conduct. Altho more indulgent toward ourselves than to others, we nevertheless try to correct our own faults. What means do we possess for this? We can resist the

accomplishment of a wrong action and prevent it. It is then authority to which we have recourse. And, indeed, we may achieve a rapid result by bringing to bear upon the individual the influence of the hope of reward or the fear of punishment. The child that is threatened with a whipping will cease his mischief; the soldier will obey from fear of the guard-house. But who does not see that this education by authority is radically false? It lowers man to the level of the animal, that also fears punishment. It is only efficacious as long as the chastisement is possible, and the child falls back into his wrong tendencies as soon as he no longer sees the schoolmaster's cane. No, authority is decidedly not a rational means, and if on certain occasions we can not do

without it, that must be by way of exception; one would needs possess but little sense of education to extol authority as a means of moral elevation.

Actions, as we have said, are the necessary and unavoidable end of the sentiments which move us at the moment of the act. If, therefore, we wish to correct actions, to prevent evil and encourage good ones, it is necessary that we modify the *sentiments.* It is in considering this task that we see the drawbacks of the conception of the sentiments which is held by the public and among certain psychologists. Sentiment is wrongly regarded as spontaneous and primary; it seems to be supposed that it depends solely upon our nature and our temperament, and that it can not be altered. So they

say: What more do you want, that is how I feel; or: It overpowers me; one does not reason about one's feelings; you can't argue about tastes and colors —just so many ways of keeping to their own opinions, without assuring that they are correct. Ah, were these sentiments always good I would in no wise fear this sentimental spontaneity. When virtue becomes automatic I shall be delighted, and, I believe, I should abandon the study of human psychology, which would be quite useless, since we would be living in an earthly paradise. But, alas, we are not there yet, and the greater part of the troubles of this world have no origin other than our wrong sentiments. It is worth our while, therefore, to correct them, and it is just here that it is necessary to

have clear ideas as to the means which we have at our disposal. They arise out of what has just been stated.

There is no *primary sentiment.* Every feeling is born just at the moment when an emotional movement has been superadded to the mental representation, to the *idea.* If we wish to change the sentiments it is necessary before all to modify the idea which has produced it, and to recognize either that it is not correct in itself or that it does not touch our interests.

A child is afraid of a dog and screams with terror. That is because he is under the dominion of a *fear,* actuated by the *idea* that the dog might bite. Now the child is making a mistake; the dog which he thinks so dangerous is only a wooden toy dog. The

best means of dissipating the fear and quieting the child will be to show him that he was mistaken; he will laugh then at his own terror. The mental representation was not correct.

A gentleman receives a disagreeable letter, accusing him of not having paid a tradesman's bill; he is enraged and takes up his pen to reply harshly. He suddenly perceives that there has been a blunder and that the impertinent letter is addrest to his neighbor. His anger at once dies down, and he proceeds to forward the letter to its destination, with perhaps a touch of malicious pleasure.

If we limit ourselves to these simple illustrations, we shall all be agreed and recognize that the only means of altering the sentiment is to *test it,* that is

to say, to see if there are reasons for the emotion. But when it is a question of more complex sentiments, this idea is forgotten, and to excuse the ill that we do, and the good that we leave undone, we entrench ourselves behind spontaneous natural feeling. One often hears kind and intelligent women quite calmly confess: When I feel an antipathy toward any one, I never alter my sentiment; reason does not enter into the question. How charitable this is, thus to condemn without appeal one of our fellow creatures! Would it not be well for her to withhold her judgment and to learn to know the person better? Would it not be better still to exercise indulgence in regard to others and to reserve severity for one's own faults?

Suppose some one has wounded us in our self-esteem. We feel deep resentment at it; that is very natural, for the fact exists, it touches our moral interests and sentiment is awakened. But need we therefore nourish the sentiment and make it everlasting? Might we not overcome it for our own good and that of others by pardoning? Can we not recognize that the person who has caused us pain has acted as he was able, that he has judged the situation with the head that he has? What can he do if, by heredity or by education, he is not intelligent, or if he is irritable or lacking in tact?

If we are able to rapidly make these reflections, generous indulgence will take the place of the resentment which is always wrong, and happy relations

will be established between persons who seemed as tho they must remain enemies forever. To abandon oneself to one's feelings means to be impulsive and to compromise one's own happiness and that of others. *All the feelings must therefore be submitted to the criticism of the reason.* You will perhaps say: But my sentiment is a good one. How then do you know that it is good, if you have not submitted it to a judgment by the help of your reason?

One often hears a fear exprest lest the preoccupation of watching over our mental representations, before they have become colored by sentiment, should relax the mental operations and prevent spontaneity of action. Yes, if on the occasion of every sentiment a

quarter of an hour's reflection were necessary before yielding oneself to it, man would be inferior to the animal, to the mollusc, which, thanks to its instinct, would react more quickly than he. But there is no question at all of this.

The judgment which we form as to the value of the motive which is causing us to act is made often with incredible promptitude; with one rapid glance of the eye, we recognize whether a certain action is right or wrong, when we have acquired the habit of reasoning.

And the same is found in the whole of our moral life. An *image* awakens our desire; a *sentiment* is born and leads on to the *action*. Before the sentiment has grown large and perhaps

become imperative, let us judge it by the light of our moral ideas, by our religious or philosophic convictions. If our reason approve, let us give free rein to our impulse, let us push the sentiment to enthusiasm; let us intoxicate ourselves with this sentiment. The habit of submitting our sentiments to the control of the reason does not lead to indifference or inertia; on the contrary, it makes our soul sensitive. It becomes then a well-tuned lyre, which vibrates to the lightest touch, yet whose harmony remains perfect even in fortissimo passages.

A noble, happy life is possible only with this harmony between the sentiments which dictate our actions and our moral conceptions, and it is attained only by a constant *education of*

ourselves. It is not accomplished by a sovereign, autonomous will, capable of spontaneously setting itself in motion. *Moral clear-sightedness* is developed out of our own experience and that of others, and by the guidance which we have received from our parents and our educators. This acuity of moral vision enables us to appreciate the import of our actions in the twinkling of an eye; it represses evil tendencies and allows free course to those which are good. *Reason* is the sole light which guides us. When it is developed by self-culture, it becomes as tho instinctive and preestablished, and we need not reason at length on the occasion of every act of our existence. Like a pilot navigating a rocky sea, we quickly make the turn of the helm that saves us.

Here I must again oppose a false idea which one often hears exprest. In the moral domain, *reason* is generally set against *faith,* and rationalists against believers. No doubt, there always has been, and there always will be, a keen contest between those who found themselves upon pure reason and those who adhere to what has been called "religious experience." But I am not debating that difficult question; I do not propose to defend the cause of free thought to-day, and far from accentuating these divergencies, I would on the contrary, like to demonstrate that we are able to clasp hands on the common ground of the moral.

The individual who bases his life upon his convictions, in a spiritual religion, does so because he considers

that he has *reasons for believing.* It is still a judgment which he brings to the aid of his reason, even if his conclusions be not acceptable by another, even tho he delights in mystery. In the last resort it is always the reason which guides us.

The education of ourselves is a very difficult task. Egoism is natural and indelible, and no one succeeds in freeing himself entirely from it. And yet no moral progress is possible without the control of the reason over the sentiments. Without that it is moral disorder, in which bad actions follow good, like the contrary movements of a weather-cock. Such is the conduct of those impulsive people who are one day capable of a generous act and the next of committing a villainy. Down to the

criminals, one observes these strange contradictions of the soul that has not found its rule. The other day it was some young lads fifteen and sixteen years of age who murdered five persons in cold blood, and yet one of them wrote pages of sentiment upon the virtues of his good mother. Another time it is a peasant who has managed to be a pretty good husband and a kind father, yet who kills from motives of pure interest.

Moral education must be commenced from the tenderest infancy. The child is an impulsive being; he has the egoism of the animal. It is part of his nature. So you will not be severe toward the babe who devours his biscuit without thinking of sharing it with his brother or even robs him of his

own; it is not yet the time to teach him the lesson. But when the child becomes bigger do not, like many parents, laugh at his eagerness to defend his belongings, his impulsiveness and his rages, as tho they were simply the fruit of his vivacity. Character reveals itself very soon; faults grow like weeds, while the virtues are like orchids, difficult to rear. I know many unhappy families in whom these seeds have developed into moral weeds, into crime or insanity. What is to be done?

Must we limit ourselves to giving the child a little warning smack? Yes, there is nothing else to be done with a young child. But as soon as the child has picked up a sufficient load of *mental images,* do not hesitate to make him appreciate the difference between

right and wrong. You will not go the length of having recourse to moral dissertations; he would not understand them. There are a thousand opportunities of awakening in him the very simple idea that *one should not do to others that which one would not that they did to him.* Take advantage of a moment when he has just felt the effects of injustice himself. Before all, set him the example; it is the means of education *par excellence.* You, madam, who complains of the irritability of your little girl; could you not suppress your own, which I have seen break out in a few words exchanged with your dear husband, immediately afterward? You, sir, who bitterly reproach your son for his impulsiveness and instability of temper, have you not these faults

yourself? He so much resembles you in the face that I would be astonished if you had not transmitted your weaknesses to him. Whence would he get them, indeed, if not from you, from his ancestors and from the education which he has received? Remember the proverb: The fruit does not fall far from the tree.

As soon as the child's mind is sufficiently developed to grasp simple reasoning, authority should be renounced and use made of reason. One can lead children of five and six years of age to useful reflections, which they will apply to very various situations in the course of their lives. Thus one can inculcate in them an optimistic way of regarding unpleasant occurrences, taking them in good part, as is said. A

good woman, subject to fits of dejection and changes of humor over the slightest vexation, quickly understood my teaching and learned to control herself, and she exprest the desire that her children should profit by the same instruction. "I should like," she said, "to accustom them to be afraid of nothing, neither sickness nor death." "Good heavens!" I replied, "you want to make them perfect Stoics; I think that would not be like their age; content yourself with lessons more within their capacity." "What lessons?" "Well, suppose that your little girl has a school treat in prospect, to which she is looking forward with great glee. The weather breaks down and you learn that the excursion will not take place. Then the child cries and pur-

sues you with her complaints. Do not make fun of her or be sharp with her or say: Let one have peace, it is not worth troubling about. No, be really compassionate with her, for in her child's mind she is suffering; do not be afraid to put yourself upon her level and to judge from her point of view. But when you have tranquillized her a little by your sympathy, say these simple words to her: My child, very often again in life your desires will be disappointed and you will be obliged to accept your lot. One should learn the habit of adaptation to circumstances which can not be changed, and should take it in good-humor. You must give up the excursion to-day, which would really not be nice in this weather; accept this vexation and be cheerful;

invite some of your little friends and you can play with your dolls.

It would not be a healthy-minded child who was inaccessible to this little reasoning, if it were presented by a mother both firm and kind, whose voice warmed by love, already colored with sentiment the reasonable idea which she exprest. And observe that this lesson does not only apply to the present incident, it will not need to be repeated every time that the child sees its desires thwarted. No, if she has understood, the little girl, and later, the woman, will apply this idea at the outset and in advance to all the events of her life. Doubtless she may forget it and sometimes be sad; but she will understand always better according as her experiences of life become defined.

She will thus acquire that *power of adaptation* so precious for our happiness and that of those around us.

Take the case of a boy at the age of development. His mentality is as yet unstable, and in the face of the least failure he becomes discouraged. If you are his father, beware of finding fault with him and of telling him he is lazy and good for nothing; you would hurt him and render him intractable. Have you not suffered from analogous feelings at the same age? Have you always had courage? I very much doubt it. Understand, therefore, and excuse that state of mind, but correct it. Be kindly to your son, who is a little weak, a little neurasthenic, as one says now-a-days, but point out to him the uselessness of dis-

couragement and its dangers. Has one ever seen discouragement improve a situation? No, it always aggravates it. Then is it a pleasant feeling? No, it is painful. And we give ourselves over to a feeling which is painful and which compromises our future! Develop these ideas clearly in repeated conversations, and you will most often triumph over this moral weakness.

You have here then two aspects of the mind: *necessity for adaptation* to circumstances and *necessity for courage,* which are associated and complement each other. There is no need to demand a time for reflection in every circumstance, in order to make use of them, like a sentinel who, when attacked, would say: "Wait until I go and fetch my weapons." A principle which

we have admitted, and which we love as a moral truth, acts upon us immediately and constrains us to the salutary action. We are the slaves of our convictions. The man who thoroughly grasps these two master-ideas detests discouragement as Montaigne "hated melancholy," and he will be able to accept things just as they are. The moment that he enters upon impediments and difficulties, the words, "Let me play my part!" and "Forward, courage!" are already on his lips. The life of a man is already well directed for action when he loves these ideas and inscribes them upon his banner.

The same holds in regard to all moral ideas, whether we obtain them from the teaching of a religion or from a philosophy. There again we still find

the psychological triad: *mental representation, sentiment* and *action.* There lies the whole psychology of the human being, and Guyau was right when he wrote: "He who does not act according as he thinks, thinks incompletely." Pascal has said: "Learn to think well, it is the principle of morality."

May I be permitted, in conclusion, to touch upon some ideas and sentiments that appear to me to have a still greater importance and which unfortunately have not yet penetrated the understanding of all? I wish to speak of the *determinist* idea, and as I have defended that philosophy during a whole lifetime, I may be allowed to be very personal here and to speak of *myself*—odious tho that be considered. My exposition will be clearer thus.

At about the age of seventeen, I had occasion to be present at a sitting of the court of correction. In the dock I saw the prisoner, guilty of I know not what offense, and from the eminence of his arm-chair, a judge of rubicund countenance read in a loud voice, and in a severe and scornful tone, the sentence that smote this man of the people. What effect did this scene—so commonplace in its frequency—produce upon my adolescent mind? Some will say: No doubt, you felt indignation in the presence of this malefactor and realized all the majesty of human justice.

But no, I confess, I left that place pensive and troubled and made the following reflection which will, perhaps, be considered absurd: If the important

personage who occupied the bench had passed through the same circumstances, if he were the son of the same parents, if he had received the same education, had suffered in his life the same contagions of vice, if, lastly, he had been subjected to the same conditions of destitution, it is he who would be in the dock, and vice versa, if the man in the blue blouse had had the same privileges as his judge, it is he who would have been passing sentence in the same haughty and sententious tone.

That scene of my youth has remained engraved upon my mind. It engendered in me a sentiment of profound pity for those who are drawn into the path of evil. The thought was then forced upon me as a truth that: at the moment when he acts, either for good

or for evil, every man is *that which he is able to be* in virtue of his physical and mental constitution. He owes his defects as well as his good qualities to atavism, heredity, and the education that he has received or that he has suffered surreptitiously in the social contagions of virtue or of vice. *We should never despise a wrong-doer,* and we have but one task in regard to him—to help him to emerge from the path into which he has strayed. That is the conclusion that I drew from this incident of my youth.

Only afterward I learned that Socrates had understood this determinism of our destiny, and had said that men were not wicked but that they make mistakes. He had this language of indulgence still upon his lips when the

poison-cup was given to him. It was not until later that I understood the clemency of Jesus to the woman taken in adultery: "Let him who feels himself without sin cast the first stone!" It was but recently that I read the beautiful saying of a French Dominican, Père Lacordaire: "To understand all is to pardon all."

I am astonished that so clear and so logical an idea, and one so happy in its consequences, has not met with the support of all, and has not permeated our manner of life. Why is this? It is because people do not think, that they reason with ready-made ideas and draw erroneous conclusions from unattackable premises. A great French doctor, Georget, long ago wrote: "There is but one person in a hundred, nay, in a

thousand, who *thinks*." That is a little severe, but it is not far from the truth.

This determinism that connects every occurrence of the moral life with causes that have determined it, in no way leads to inertia or to moral indifference. On the contrary, it is the best instrument of moral progress, for it teaches us that we can improve the mentality of the wrong-doer by inculcating in him moral principles that will determine his future conduct. As I have elsewhere [1] said, all education is based upon this idea of determination, which is not frankly admitted. Education has for its object, simply, the enriching of the

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"Self Control and How to Secure It." (Funk & Wagnalls Company, New York and London.)

consciousness with those ideas of right and wrong that alone can prevent downfall.

I wish to be well understood; it is not a case of saying that there is neither right nor wrong. Wrong we know perfectly, since we can so readily discover it in others and criticize them; and right, we also recognize, even tho it be only because we know that we do not practise it. Determinism does not excuse the wrong action; it teaches us, on the contrary, always better to see its ugliness and to recognize the moral evil, that is to say, egoism, even in actions which are pardoned by the easy morality of our society—civilized on the surface. In this way one refines one's soul and renders it more scrupulous in the best sense of the word.

Urged on by the love of the good we endeavor to practise it, and lead to it those upon whom we are able to exercise an influence. We lose this influence if we wound the wrong-doer by reproach and disdain. It is the action we should blame, and not the culprit. Our task in regard to him is educative; it consists in showing him that he is upon a wrong road, and in indicating to him the right, as one would do to a strayed traveler. We can not accomplish this task unless there be a bond of confidence and sympathy established between ourselves and the one who has acted wrongly.

Even punishment which is necessary as a warning and for the protection of society must have the improvement of the wrong-doer as its object, and not

be dictated by an idea of vengeance. This conception is beginning to lay hold of many minds which metaphysical convictions keep apart. Societies are everywhere being formed for the care of liberated prisoners and the education of young delinquents. Conditional freedom, in which the penalty is exacted from the convict only if he falls back into his error, is, little by little, being introduced into all the codes; it will perhaps lead to the law of pardon, which, while stigmatizing the act, would recognize in the delinquency an error, evidently blameworthy, but explicable by the past of the individual.

If you have the happiness to be a well-living man, take care not to attribute the credit of it to yourself. Remember the favorable conditions in

which you have lived, surrounded by relatives who loved you, and set you a good example; do not forget the close friends who have taken you by the hand and led you away from the quagmires of evil; keep a grateful remembrance for all the teachers who have influenced you, the kind and intelligent school-master, the devoted pastor; realize all these multiple influences which have made of you what you are. Then you will remember that such and such a culprit has not in his sad life met with these favorable conditions, that he had a drunken father and a foolish mother, and that he has lived without affection, exposed to all kinds of temptation. You will then take pity upon this disinherited man whose mind has been nourished upon malformed mental

images, begetting evil sentiments of immoderate desire or social hatred. Lastly, you will recognize that society is itself also responsible for all these misdeeds, for all these crimes, since, while dispensing instruction in profusion, it neglects the moral education and leaves thousands of individuals to stagnate in material and moral destitution.

Happily, this idea of indulgence toward the guilty in making progress in all directions. Some years ago, in a Swiss canton which had retained the death penalty, a young tramp who had murdered a poor, lonely man, in order to rob him of a few pence, obtained from the jury the benefit of extenuating circumstances. His judges were not of those "intellectual persons"

who are accused nowadays of disturbing the mind; they were honest peasants, ignorant of questions of determinism, but who, in their good sense, found that it was necessary to take account of the deplorable education which the young criminal had received. You advocates, and professors of law who still resist the idea of determinism, have a care! You are going to be forestalled by the ignorant public, and would that not be somewhat humiliating?

A gentleman who had lived for thirty years in Mexico was speaking to me sympathetically about the character of the people. He added: "They are very choleric and passionate and ready with the knife. But it is a curious thing, that when a brawl ends in murder, it

is not the dead man whom they pity, it is the murderer. Men and women congregate at the place where the crime has been committed and exclaim: 'Oh, poor fellow, he has killed a man!'" These words, which seemed strange to my friend, have a profound signification. Indeed, it is not the dead man who is to be pitied; he no longer feels anything, and perhaps even, if by his virtues he merits it, according to the conception of these people, he will enter into the abode of the blest. They also, no doubt, commiserate the relatives of the victim, the widow who weeps for him, and his children; but they are not always present. Their pity then goes out to the culprit, whose dagger-stroke has had such lamentable consequences. They know that they

themselves are also impulsive and passionate, and capable of dealing a vicious blow on occasion; they also realize the grievous position in which the guilty man has placed himself, the prison which awaits him, and perhaps also damnation to a hell of whose reality they have no doubt.

It is *moralizing reason* alone which can oppose the human passions and diminish the dominion of evil propensities in the individual and in the masses by submitting the sentiments to its criticism. The instruction with which the schools deluge us is not sufficient for that; what is required is an educative influence developing moral clear-sightedness.

That is the idea which inspired the whole life of the immortal Socrates.

He had only one object: The development of his good qualities and the conquering of his own faults. He desired to transmit to his fellow citizens that *self-mastery,* which consists simply in testing one's mental images in order that they may determine good sentiments and actions. He put, perhaps, a little too much severity into his criticism of others and of himself; he was sometimes derisive; indeed, they put this troublesome moralist to death. And, nevertheless, the *Socratic idea* dominates the world; it is the scientific spirit which wants to know the wherefore of things.

This beneficent conception has still many enemies. It has against it the great mass of impulsive people who act under the dominion of sentiments that

are unreasoned and in consequence often unreasonable. But these simple minds have still common sense; they are accessible to reasoning and to education, and it is the task of those who have the privilege of being able to think, to further the education of the vulgar masses by word of mouth, by book, and above all, by example.

The movement toward a rational development of morality meets with great opposition in certain self-styled religious quarters where narrowness of mind creates a gloomy intolerance. To these fanatics who have not understood the utterance of the Master whom they invoke, it is a crime not to think as they do, and to believe in progress; so they must dance attendance on the conception of original sin. But that group

is a small one; it sets itself in opposition to the aspirations of the whole of humanity, which unceasingly evolves and pursues its progress toward the truth which is knowable and accessible to our minds.

The Socratic idea has opponents again among literary men in love with fantasy, and among persons who, under the pretext of art, cherish the slavery of the sentiments, indeed, even in the circle of the philosophers. There have always been, and always will be, *anarchists of thought,* who do not see the beauty of order and the serenity of right thinking. They live by vague impressions and impulses, and to them instinct seems superior to intelligence.

Of these innovators, Nietzsche is the most daring. He hates this Socrates

who dully made Greek tragedy wiser, and who caused Euripides to follow Sophocles and Æschylus. So, they would say, let there be more Dionysiac frenzy, more monstrous passions, more criminal heroes raised to the rank of demigods. The dramatic art is becoming parochial; it describes every-day life as it is, with its paltry passions, its petty criminals, and its impassioned but scrupulous people whom reason still restrains. Nietzsche calls the morality derived both from philosophy and Christianity a "morality of slaves," and he invents his "superman," preoccupied entirely with himself and obeying his own impulses, without a care for his fellow men or for moral laws.

An imaginative novelist, Maurice

Barrès, came back to us from Greece convinced that the Athenians were a thousand times right to have forced this troublesome Socrates to drink hemlock—perish his race. A Spanish poet, whose name I have forgotten, returned from the Attic shores with the same conviction. Finally, Bergson, tho a well-balanced and subtle philosopher, suggests that instinct would guide us to knowledge of the truth better than reasoning intelligence. He forgets that man has instincts only in his pure animality, and that instinct, if trustworthy in the animal is atrophied in man, since it has given place to intelligence—more powerful and complex, and less simply efficacious.

There is an incoherence in the moral ideas of the present day; doubt is cast

upon everything. Our writers are partly the cause of this disorder. The younger generation knows only the names of the philosophers of antiquity, while religious faith is declining. With Nietzsche, egoism is exalted and paradox is revelled in; with Schopenhauer we drink our fill of pessimism, and Hartmann initiates us into the mysteries of the unconscious, or subconscious, which allows us to abandon ourselves to our sentiments without submitting them to the criticism of the reason. Numbers of women writers in every country are devoting their whole literary talent to demanding the right of their sex to passion. Down with reason! Long live sentiment! is the cry from the dainty lips of our lady novelists and poetesses. What is morality?

It varies from one individual to another, they exclaim. No; there is a good old morality that has always existed and that has scarcely varied since antiquity, for it is founded upon common sense, upon reason. A little hard among the Stoics, it was softened under the influence of primitive Christianity—I shall not say of present-day Christianity—and we are living now impregnated by a morality at once philosophic and religious. It is strong enough to resist all attacks and pursues its development careless of metaphysical and dogmatic quarrels.

It teaches us to bring serene reason into our lives, in order that we may harmonize our conduct with the ideal that we have set before us. It is epitomized in that inscription in the

temple of Ephesus, which Socrates considered so beautiful: "*Know thou thyself.*" To-day it seems to be necessary to add, "*and correct thyself*"; by the Greeks, who were better thinkers, that was understood.

THE END

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